

THE BARRIER

NO. 1590

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”
Revelation 21:27.

THE text refers to the glorified church of our Lord Jesus Christ. That perfected company of the elect and sanctified is set forth in this wonderful chapter under the image of a city descending “from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Her workday dress all laid aside, the bride appears in garments of needlework and raiment of wrought gold. The militant church, the church of the present day, is comparable to a tent and is well imaged by the tabernacle in the wilderness—it is lit up within by the glory of God's presence and covered without by the fiery cloudy pillar of His eternal providence.

But yet to the eyes of men it is mean and inconsiderable, for verily it does not yet appear what it shall be. By-and-by this same church, which today is likened unto a structure of curtains readily removed from place to place, shall become a city, fixed, permanent, high-walled, and compact—a “city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The comforts and trials of the desert life shall be exchanged for the quiet and comfort of a city dwelling. There shall be nothing of the wilderness about the church triumphant—it shall be a right royal abode, the metropolis of the universe, the palace of the great King.

Everything that is lustrous, pure, precious, majestic shall be there. Rare and priceless things which are now the peculiar treasure of kings shall be the common possession of all the sanctified. The church shall be no longer despised, but shall sit as a queen among the nations, while at her feet they shall heap up all their glory and honor. In that church there shall remain nothing for which men shall reproach her, but everything shall be manifested in her for which they shall do her honor. Her very streets to be trodden on shall be of pure gold like unto transparent glass and her lowest course of stones shall be of jasper. Everything about the perfected church shall be the best of the best—she shall be recognized as being the fairest among women, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the crown and flower of the universe.

We read the sparkling figures of John's vision as emblems of moral and spiritual excellence, but we doubt not that, beyond the spiritual riches of the church, all materialism will also be at her disposal and the restored creation shall bring her choicest beauties to adorn the chosen bride of the Lamb. We have said that the glorified church will be the crown of the new creation and it is into the new heavens and the new earth that she is represented as coming down from God. He that sits upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

The creation which is round about us at this hour waxes old and is ready to vanish away. Wise men tell us that there are evident preparations in the bowels of the earth for a burning up of the earth and of all the works of men that are upon it, for its center is an ocean of fire. God shall but speak, and as once the waters leaped upon the world and utterly destroyed all things that were upon it, so shall He call to the waves of flame and they shall rise from their hidden furnaces to melt all things with their fervent heat.

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. The former things shall have passed away and a new creation shall dwell beneath the new

heavens, filling up the new earth—and the flower and perfection of the new creation shall be the church of the living God in her full bloom and perfectness.

Even now the regenerate are a kind of first fruits of God's creatures, the forerunners of the renewed universe. But then they shall be its center and glory. The new birth is the beginning of the new creation—we lead the way, even we who are the church of the firstborn, but the whole creation groans to follow us so as to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

It is the glorified church, I say, that is here spoken of and hence the text may be said to refer to heaven, for at the present moment the nucleus of the glorified church is in heaven and from heaven every defiled thing must be shut out.

Hence, too, it may refer to the kingdom of the millennial age, when the saints will reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years, when even upon this battlefield our conquering Leader shall be crowned with victory, and where His blood was shed, His throne shall be set up, for among the sons of men shall He triumph, even among those that spat in His face.

The text may also be read as including the eternal world of future bliss, for of that glorious, endless, undefiled inheritance, the church glorified will be the possessor, but out of her shall long before have been gathered all things that offend and them that do iniquity. From heaven and from all heavenly joys and states, sin must be shut out. Into the perfected church there shall never enter anything that defiles, and from all its honors and rewards every polluted person is shut out by immutable decree.

I should like you for a minute or two to think of that perfected church as she is described in this chapter, for it is a description worthy of the profoundest study. What glory will surround the risen saints in their capacity as the city of God—"having the glory of God"—says the eleventh verse. What a glory of glories is this! Even now, my brethren and sisters, you that are in Christ possess the grace of God, but you shall by-and-by conspicuously shine with the glory of God. At present you share in the dishonor which falls to the lot of your Master and His cause among a wicked generation, but then you shall share in the glory which is the reward of the travail of His soul. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

How glorious will that church be whose light shall be the presence of God Himself—light in which the nations of them that are saved shall rejoice. O my God, write my name among them! And to that end write me among Your persecuted saints below. Well may we be content to endure what little shame shall come upon the church militant on earth if we may participate in the honor of the church glorified above, for this is a glory which excels, "having the glory of God."

The city is described as exhibiting great massiveness, for the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It is a solid square, perfect and compact—

*"Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamond square."*

What a church will the church of God be in those happier days! Now she is as a rolling thing, removed as readily as a shepherd's tent, but then she shall stand firm as a cube which rests upon its base.

We watch the church of God sometimes with trepidation and alarm, for though we know that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, yet her feebleness makes the timid tremble. But in her state after the resurrection there shall remain no signs of feebleness, for that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. She shall be a city the like of which has never been beheld, whose foundation shall be deeper than the depths beneath and her towers shall reach above the clouds. No institution shall exist so long or flourish so abundantly as the church of the living God.

When you think of the massiveness of the church of God settled in her place by the Almighty Himself who has established her, remember at the same time her vastness, for a multitude that no man can number shall be comprehended among her inhabitants—her census shall prove her citizens to be as

the stars of heaven for multitude. Her stones shall not lie cut about as a little heap, but from her vast foundation the living stones shall rise course upon course, twelve foundations of jewels, till “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be exalted above the hills.”

I say again, write my name down among the dwellers in the great city! What higher honor can I crave than to have it said, “This man was born there”? To be numbered with princes, to be named with emperors—what of it! Your golden fleece, silken garter, and gilded stars are all poor toys—true glory lies in being part and parcel of the church—today despised and rejected by men, but which shall ere long look forth fair as the sun and astonish the world with the brightness of her rising. Ambition’s self needs ask no more than citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The perfection of the church is set forth in her being foursquare, her value in the sight of God by her walls being composed of the rarest gems and her delights in the variety of the sparkling jewels which bedeck her, there being scarcely one precious stone omitted of those that were known to Orientals, while some are mentioned which are scarcely known to us at all. All manner of joys and treasures and pleasures and delights, every form and shade of excellence, virtue, and bliss shall belong to the perfected ones when their number and character shall be complete and they shall be comparable to the city of God.

The safety and quiet of the church is set forth by her gates forever open. In times of war the city gates are fast closed, but for the New Jerusalem, there will remain no fear of foe, no need to set a watch against an invader. Gog and Magog will be slain, and Armageddon’s battle fought and finished and unbroken rest shall be the portion of the glorified. Write my name among them, O my God, and permit me to enter into Your rest.

Best of all, remark how holy the church will be. She shall have no temple within her walls, for this simple reason, that she shall be all temple. She shall have no spot reserved for sacred uses, because all shall be “holiness unto the LORD.” The divine presence shall be in all and over all, and this shall be the joy of her joy. “The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Brethren, the glory of the church even here below is the presence of God in her midst, but what will that presence be when it shines forth in noonday brightness—when spirits strengthened for the vision shall endure with transport the full splendor of JEHOVAH’s throne? Tongue cannot tell the glory, for thought cannot conceive it. Write my name among the blessed who shall see JEHOVAH’s face. O living God, my soul thirsts after You. To dwell in Your presence is the summit of the soul’s delight. To be with You where You are and to behold Your glory is the heaven of heaven. To what beyond this can thoughts aspire?

I. It being declared that the glorified church is to be all this, and a great deal more, of which we cannot now speak particularly, we may well long to enter within her gates of pearl. But what says the text? I beseech you listen attentively to the solemn sound of THE WORD OF EXCLUSION—“There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie.”

Listen, I say, to this word of exclusion, though it sounds like a death-knell in my ears. Learn that it can be abundantly justified to the conscience of all thoughtful men. Learn that your own soul, if it be honest, must set its seal to the sentence of exclusion. This is no arbitrary decree, it is a solemn declaration to which all holy spirits give their willing assent and consent—an ordinance of which even the excluded themselves shall admit the justice.

For, first, *it is not meet that so royal and divine a corporation as the glorified church of God should be ruined by defilement.* God forbid that “her light, which is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal,” should ever be dimmed by the breath of sin. How beautiful was this fair world in the early morning of her creation, when the dew of her youth glistened upon her, and the sunlight of God made her face to shine. Keep watch and ward, you shining ones, that this beauty be not marred! Let watchers and holy ones fly round the new-made world to drive far hence the apostate spirit and his fellows who kept not their first estate. Sad was the hour when with dragon wing the fallen spirit descended into Eden, advanced to mother Eve and whispered in her ear the fell temptation. Oh, you

seraphs, would God your fiery swords had kept out the arch-deceiver, that this world might never have fallen, that we might have dwelt here amidst sunny glades, by pure rivers rippling o'er sands of gold, a holy and happy race, making every hill and valley vocal with the praises of God.

Now, O earth, you are a field of blood, but you might have been a garden of delights. Now are you one vast cemetery, where all the dust was once a part of the living fabric of mortal men—but you might have been as the firmament filled with stars, all shining to their Creator's praise. Alas that Eden should now remain only as a name—gone as a vision of the night! Inasmuch as we could heartily wish that evil had never entered into the primeval world, we earnestly deprecate the idea that it should ever defile the new. Shall those new heavens ever look down with amazement upon the flight of a rebellious spirit, flying, beneath their serene azure, on an errand of destruction? Shall the jeweled walls of the thrice holy city be overleaped by an enemy of the King who is there enthroned? Shall the serpent leave his horrid trail upon the heavenly Eden, twice made of the Lord? God forbid!

The purity of a world twice made, the perfection of the church of the regenerate, the majesty of the presence of God, all demand that every sinful thing should be excluded. All heaven and heavenly things cry, "Write the decree and make it sure, there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles." Grave it as in eternal brass and let omnipotence go with the decree to execute it with the utmost rigor, for it would be horrible indeed if a second time evil should destroy the work of God. Into the church of the firstborn above, the breath of iniquity must not enter. It cannot be that the work which cost the Redeemer's blood should yet be defiled. The eternal purpose of the Father and the love of the Spirit forbid that the Lord's own perfected church should be invaded by any unholy thing.

Brethren, there can be no entrance of evil into the kingdom of God, for *it is the very essence of the bliss of the glorified church that evil should be excluded*. Imagine for a moment that the decree of our text were reversed or suspended, and that it were allowed that a few unregenerate men and women should enter into the glorified church of God. Suppose, in addition, that those few should be of the gentler sort of sinners, not those who would profanely blaspheme the name of God, nor openly break the eternal Sabbath, but a few who are indifferent to God's glory and cold and formal in His praise. How could heaven bear with these? These who are neither cold nor hot are sickening both to Christ and to His people, and must they endure the nausea of their society? Why, as in a living body the existence of a dead piece of bone breeds fret, and pain, and disease, so would the presence of these few defiling ones cause, I know not what, of disquietude and sorrow. It must not be.

Love to the saints demands that they be no more vexed by sin or sinners. Pity, mercy, yes, even the partiality of kindred love dares not ask that it may be. All heaven is up in arms at the supposition. Holy spirits are alarmed at the idea that they should again be tempted by the presence of evil. Bar the gates of pearl and never open them again, you spirits, rather than that there should come upon that pure street of transparent gold a foot that will not walk in the ways of God's commandments, or the halls of Zion be disgraced by a single spirit that shall refuse to love the holy and exalted name. Heaven were not heaven if it were possible for evil of any sort to enter there. Therefore, stand firm, O dread decree, for it would be cruelty to saints and destruction to heaven that there should in anywise enter into it anything that defiles.

Furthermore, let me beg you to consider that there is an impossibility of any defiled, sinful, unregenerate person ever entering into the body corporate of the glorified church of God—*an impossibility within the persons themselves*. Look, good sirs, the reason why wicked men cannot be happy is not only because God will not let rebellion and peace dwell together, but because they will not let themselves be happy. The sea cannot rest because it is the sea and the sinner cannot be quiet because he is a sinner. How could you, O natural, unregenerate man, ever enter into the kingdom of heaven as you are? You are not capable of it. It is not possible to you. Holiness has in it no attractions for you, since you love sin and the wages of it. You do not know God and cannot see Him, for this is the privilege of the pure in heart and of them alone. You live in a world where everything has been made by the great Lord and yet you

do not perceive His hands, so great is your blindness. Shall blind men grope through the streets of the New Jerusalem?

You are unacquainted with the simplest elements of spiritual things, for they can only be spiritually discerned, and you have no spiritual faculty. You are blind and deaf, yea, dead to God and heavenly things—you know you are. Well, then, of what use would it be that you should enter the spiritual realm, supposing it to be a place? For if you were admitted into the place called heaven, you would not be a partaker of the state of heaven, and it is the state of mind and character which is, after all, the essence of the joy. To be in a heavenly place and not in a heavenly condition would be worse than hell, if worse can be. What are songs to a sad heart? Such would heaven be to an unrenewed mind. The element of glory would destroy, rather than bless an unrenewed mind.

It is as though you saw before you a blazing furnace in which happy creatures disported themselves among the flames, bathing themselves in the white heat, leaping in rapture amid the rising sparks, for they are children of the flame, who drink in fire and find it life. Imagine yourself to be a poor fly such as you hear buzzing on the windowpane, and you ask to enter into the glow of the furnace, thinking to be as merry as the fire-children. Keep back. Why tempt your doom? You will die soon enough—why ask to perish more quickly? No place would be so dreadful to a sinner as the place where God is most openly manifest. That holy element, which is the habitat of the new-born soul, would be the grave, the everlasting prison-house if an unholy soul could enter there.

To the wicked, the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, and the glory of the Lord is terror and not bliss. Oh, unconverted hearer, they sing in heaven, but in their songs your ear would find no delight. They worship God in heaven, but as divine worship is irksome to you, even if it be kept up for an hour or so below, what would it be to dwell forever and ever in the world to come in the midst of hallelujahs? O soul defiled with sin, you are incapable of heaven. The Roman Emperor Caligula, in his madness, made his horse first consul of Rome—but his horse could not be a magistrate—it could not judge or govern, whatever the emperor might decree. Though he fed it upon gilded oats from an ivory manger, it was a horse and nothing more.

Even so, if a man is unregenerate and unbelieving, we may do what we will with him, but he cannot rise to spiritual joys, and if we could even bid him come into heaven, still he would remain what he was, incapable of the joy and bliss which God has prepared for them that love Him. So stands it a fact in the very essence and nature of things, that there shall in no wise enter into the realm of the spiritual, the kingdom of the true, the land of the blessed, the home of the perfected, anything that defiles. It cannot come there from incapacity within itself.

Let me add that *our own hearts forbid that evil should so enter*. As I mused on this text, I supposed myself to be defiled with sin, yet standing outside the pearl gates of heaven. Then I said within myself, “If I might enter there defiled as I am, would I do so?” And my heart answered, “No, I would not if I might. How could I blot such brightness and spoil such happiness?”

Suppose myself infected today with a deadly fever—an incurable typhus which would bring death to any that touched me? The blast is pitiless and the snow is falling, and I stand shivering at the door of one of your houses longing for shelter. I see inside the room your little children, sporting in full health. Shall I venture among them? I long to escape from the cold without, but if I should enter your room I should bring to you fever, and death to your innocent little ones and to yourselves, and thus turn your happiness into misery. I would turn away and brave the storm, and sooner die than bring such desolation into a friend’s home.

And well might any honest spirit say at sight of the perfect family above, “No, if I might, I would not be admitted into a perfect heaven while yet I might defile it and spread the contagion of moral evil.” You know, brethren, how a few rags from the East have sometimes carried a plague into a city. And if you were standing at the dock when a plague-laden ship arrived, you would cry, “Burn those rags. Do anything with them, but keep them away from the people. Bring not the pest into a vast city where it may slay its thousands!”

So do we cry, “Great God, forbid it that anything that defiles should enter into Your perfected church! We cannot endure the thought thereof.” Draw your swords, you angels. Stand in your serried ranks, you seraphim, and smite every defiled one that would force a passage within the gates of pearl. It must be so—“There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles.”

The fiat of God has gone forth and the fiery sword is set at the gate of the new Eden. Into the first paradise there came the serpent—into the second never shall the subtle tempter enter. Into the first paradise there came sin and God was driven from it as well as man—but into the second there shall never come anything that approximates to sin or falsehood, but the Lord God shall dwell there forever and His people shall dwell there with Him. Thus much, then, upon the word of exclusion.

II. I desire, as I continue this meditation in the power of the Holy Spirit, not so much to preach as to think inwardly and ask you to think with me OF THAT WORD OF EXCLUSION WORKING WITHIN THE SOUL—within my soul, within yours.

They sit in judgment upon me and it chastens me. It strikes home to my conscience and rouses me to self-examination. Its voice is solemn and strikes heavily upon the ear, as we remember its wide sweep and comprehensive breadth—“There shall in no wise enter into it *any thing* that defiles.” No person who defiles, no fallen spirit, or sinful man can enter. And as no person, so no tendency, leaning, inclination, or will to sin can gain admission. No wish, no desire, no hunger towards that which is unclean shall ever be found in the perfect city of God. Nor even a thought of evil can be conceived there, much less a sinful act performed. Nothing shall ever be done within those gates of pearl contrary to the perfect law, nor anything imagined in opposition to spotless holiness.

Consider such purity and wonder at it. The term, “any thing that defiles,” includes even an idea, a memory, a thought of evil. Thoughts that flit through the mind as birds through the air that never roost or build a nest—even such shall never glance across the skies of the new creation. It is altogether perfect! And mark well, that no untruth can enter—“neither whatsoever makes a lie.” Nothing can enter heaven which is not real. Nothing erroneous, mistaken, conceited, hollow, professional, pretentious, unsubstantial, can be smuggled through the gates. Only truth can dwell with the God of truth. These are sweeping and searching words—no evil, nothing that works to evil—no falsehood, nothing that works to falsehood, can ever enter into the triumphant church of God. O my soul, my soul, how bears this upon you? Cuts it not to the very quick? For how are you to enter defiled as you are, and so diseased with falsehood of one sort or another?

Well may we be aroused when we remember what defiled and defiling creatures we have been in the days of our unregeneracy. Brethren, let us not shrink from the humbling contemplation. Come down from your high places and see the horrible pit in which you lie by nature. Think of your past lives, I pray you, of those days in which you found pleasure in walking after the flesh. I call on you to remember the sins of your youth and your former transgressions, of thought, word, and deed. If they are shut out who defile, and are defiled, where are you? Where are you? These sins of ours, though they were committed years ago, are none the less sinful today—they are as fresh to God as if we perpetrated them this very moment.

You are still red-handed, O sinful man, though your crime was worked some twenty years ago. You are black, O sinner, still, though it be fifty years ago that your chief sin was committed, for time has no bleaching power upon a crimson sin. The guilt of an old offense is as fresh as though it were wrought but yester-morn. Our sins in themselves make us unclean and unfit for holy company and alas, they are many.

Our sins have left a second defilement on us by creating the tendency to do the like again. Is there one among us that has sinned who does not know that he is all the more likely to sin again? Since after once being drawn aside by sin, there are stronger draggings in the same way—sin once committed becomes a fountain of defilement. The stream in which the fish has sported will be sought by it again in its season and the swallow will return to its old nest—even so will the mind return to its folly. Ay, so it

is, and if everything that defiles is shut out from the holy city—my God, my God—am not I shut out too?

Bethink you that not only does actual sin shut men out of heaven, for this text goes to the heart by reminding us that we have within us inbred sin, which would defile us speedily, even if we were now clean of positive transgression. The fount from which actual sin comes is within every unrenewed bosom. How can you and I enter heaven while there is unholy anger in us? The best of men are too apt to retain an unhallowed quickness of temper, which under certain circumstances works wrath. There shall in no wise enter into heaven a hasty temper, or a quick imperious spirit, or a malicious mind, for these defile. In certain persons there is no quickness of spirit, but there is a cold, chill obstinacy, so that having once resolved, though the resolve be evil, they stand to it doggedly and cannot be moved. Like obstinate mules, they can scarcely be driven—blows cannot stir them from their purpose. Disobedient obstinacy cannot enter the kingdom—my hearers, are you under its dominion?

And oh, there is in all of us a lusting after evil of some sort or other. Only place us in certain conditions and the flesh longs after forbidden things, and though we chide ourselves and check the longing, yet is there not within us a relish for the sweet stolen morsels of transgression? We could weep our eyes out when we discover what a palate for pleasurable sin our old nature still retains—yes, a longing for the very sin of which we most bitterly repent and from which we most eagerly long to be delivered. How can we hope to enter heaven if there are these appetites in us? They are there and they defile! What can we do?

There, too, is that vile thing called, “pride.” Why, some of us cannot be trusted with a pennyworth of success, but we are exalted above measure. Some of God’s children cannot have ten minutes’ fellowship with Christ but they must needs put on their fine feathers and crow right lustily because they feel themselves to be nearing absolute perfection. Alas for the pride of our hearts and the pollution which comes of it! How can such vain creatures be admitted among the glorified?

Nor is this all, for sloth preys on many and tempts them to shun God’s service, and especially to shun the cross of Christ. Sloth is a rust which has a sadly defiling power—we gather moth and mildew from inaction. Never is a man pure who is not zealous in the service of God. We rot to corruption if we lie still. How, then, shall we be admitted within the jeweled city?

Ah, look within your heart, my brother—look steadily beneath the fair film of the surface and mark the inward evil which it conceals. Judge not yourself alone when at your best, occupied with your prayers and praises and almsgivings, but look steadily into your soul at other times, and you shall see a loathsome mass of evil life, a seething corruption moving within your heart—for evil remains even in the regenerate—and this cannot enter heaven. Thank God, it cannot.

Even though the word of exclusion staggers me and sends me back as with a stunning blow, and makes me cry, “You shut me out, my God, by this Your decree,” yet I feel that if it be so, the decree is right, and just, and good. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles.” Amen and amen.

Now, I ask you whether this word of exclusion does not, in you who know its meaning, slay all hope of self-salvation? For, first, here are our past sins, and they defile, and make us defiling. How are we to get rid of them? How can we wash out these polluting blots? Tears! So much salt water thrown away if looked upon as a bath for sin! Good works performed! They are already due to God. How shall future discharge of debts repay the past? O my God, if I have ever known what sin means, I have also known that it is impossible that its defiling nature should ever be changed, or that the pollution should ever be removed by any efforts of my own.

I spoke with one the other day who said that she was seeking salvation by good works. I knew that she had performed self-denying acts of charity and I asked her whether she felt nearer to the salvation at which she aimed. I knew that I spoke to a sincere, honest person and her reply did not surprise me. She answered sadly, “The more I do, the more I feel I ought to do, and I am no nearer to the point I am aiming at.” And so it is—the more a sincere heart does seek to serve God, the more it feels the shortcoming of its service of Him—and the more a person seeks after purity by his own efforts, the

further he judges himself to be from it. Our standard rises as we rise toward it. Our conscience becomes tender in proportion as we obey it and so, in the nature of things, rest of heart comes not in that manner.

Ah, there remains not beneath heaven anything that can wash out the defilement of past sin save one only cleansing flood. O sinful man, plunge your hands into the Atlantic and you shall crimson every drop of its tremendous waters, and yet the stain shall be as scarlet as before. No, no, no—it is certain that no man can enter heaven by reason of his transgression and his sinfulness, except omnipotence shall cleanse him.

But then look at the other part of the difficulty, that is, the making of your own heart pure and clean. How shall this be done? How shall the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Have you tried to master your temper? I hope you have. Have you managed it? Your tendencies this way or that, you have striven against them, I hope, but have you mastered them?

I will tell you. You thought you had. You thought you had bound the enemy with strong ropes—you tied him and you fastened him down, and you shut him up in an inner chamber, and you said, “The Philistines be upon you, Samson.” You felt that the champion was vanquished now, but oh how grimly did he laugh at you as the old adversary arose within you, and snapped the bonds, and hurled you to the ground. Defeated when you thought that you had won the victory. I cannot overcome myself, nor overcome my sin. I will never cease from the task, God helping me, but apart from the divine Spirit, the task is as impossible as to make a world.

III. It seems to me that we may most fitly come to the close of our sermon by thinking of THE WORD OF SALVATION which just meets the difficulty raised by the sentence—“There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles.”

But first, my past sin, what of that? There are many who are even now within the church of God above and we will ask concerning them, “Who are these arrayed in white robes and whence came they?” We receive the reply, “These are they that have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “In the blood of the Lamb!” I feel as if I could sing those words. What joy that there should be anything that can take all my stains away—all without exception and make me whiter than snow.

If Christ be God, if it be true that He within that infant’s body contain the fullness of the deity, and being thus God and man, He did take away my sin, and in His own body on the tree did bear it and suffer its punishment for me, then I can understand how my transgression is forgiven and my sin is covered. Short of this, my conscience cannot rest. The misty atonements of modern divines cannot calm my conscience—they are not worth the time spent in listening to them, they are cobwebs of the fancy, altogether insufficient to sustain the strain even of the present conscience, much less of the conscience which shall be aroused by the judgment bar of God.

But this truth of God—Christ, instead of me, God Himself the offended one in the offender’s place, bowing His august head to vengeance and laying His eternal majesty in the dishonor of a tomb—this is the fullness of consolation. O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I shall enter heaven now! I shall pass the scrutiny of the infallible watchers. I shall not be afraid of the eyes of fire. I shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—“Washed in the blood of the Lamb!” This is our first great comfort, brethren—“He that believes in him is not condemned.” He that believes in Him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

But here is the point, there is still no entrance into the holy city as long as there are any evil tendencies within us. This is the work, this is the difficulty, and since these are to be overcome, how is the work to be done? Simple believing upon Christ brings you justification, but you need more than that—you need sanctification, the purgation of your nature, for have we not seen that until our nature itself is purged, the enjoyment of heaven is impossible? There can be no knowledge of God, no communion with God, no delight in God hereafter unless all sin is put away and our fallen nature is entirely changed. Can this be done?

It can. Faith in Christ tells us of something else beside the blood. There is a divine person—let us bow our heads and worship Him—the Holy Ghost who proceeds from the Father—and He it is who renews us in the spirit of our minds. When we believe in Jesus, the Spirit enters into the heart, creating within us a new life. That life struggles and contends against the old life, or rather the old death and as it struggles, it gathers strength and grows. It masters the evil and puts its foot upon the neck of the tendency to sin.

Do you feel this Spirit within you? You must be under its power or perish. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. I would not have you imagine that in death everything is to be accomplished for us mysteriously in the last solemn article—we are to look for a work of grace in life, a present work, molding our character among men.

Oh, sirs, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is not a sort of extreme unction reserved for deathbeds—it is a matter for the walks of life and the activities of today. I do not know how much is done in the saint during the last minute of his lingering here, but this I know, that in a true believer the conquest of sin is a matter to be begun as soon as he is converted and to be carried on throughout life. If the Spirit of God dwells in us, we walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, and we mortify the corruptions and lusts of the old man. There must be now a treading under foot of lust and pride, and every evil thing, or these evils will tread us under foot forever in the future state where character never changes. There must be *now* a rejection of the lie, a casting out of the false, or we shall be cast out ourselves forever. There must be *now* a cry, “O LORD, you desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part you shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

Beloved, it is to this we must come, to be washed in the water which flowed with the blood from Jesus’ side, for there must be a purging of nature as well as a removal of actual transgression or else the inevitable decree, like a fiery sword, will keep the gate of paradise against us. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie.”

O my hearers, suppose we should never enter there! No, start not, for the supposition will soon be a fact with many of you except you repent. Suppose we should be in the next world what some of us are now, defiled and untruthful—what remains?

That is an awful text in the parable of the virgins—“And the door was shut.” You read of those who said, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” to whom He answered, “I know you not.” You have read of them—will any of us be among them? Will any of us who has a lamp, and is thought to be a virgin soul, be among the shut out ones, on whose ears shall fall the words, “I know you not whence you are”? You see you cannot be anywhere else but *out* unless you are *in*. And you must be shut out if you are defiled and defiling.

Dear heart, this is a question I beg you to look to at once. You do not know how short a time you have left to you in which you may look into it. Some who were here but a Sabbath-day or so ago are now gone from us. Eleven deaths were reported at one church meeting among our members! We are a dying people. We shall all be gone within a very short time.

I charge you by the living God and as you are dying men and women—see to it that you are not shut out, so as to hear the fatal cry—“Too late, too late, you cannot enter now.” There shall be no purgation in eternity and no possible way of entering in among the perfected, for it is written, “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defiles.” No crying, “Lord! Lord!” No striving to enter in, no tears, no, not even the pangs of hell itself shall ever purge the soul so as to make it fit to join with the holy church above, should it pass into the future state uncleansed. Shut out! Shut out!

O God, may that never be true of anyone among us, for Christ’s dear name’s sake, Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 21

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—855, 867, 51

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.